

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 27 January 2003 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of
the Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations
addressed to the President of the Security Council**

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of an address delivered by the Commander-in-Chief, Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), His Excellency President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, to members of the RSLAF and other security agencies, at this year's celebration of Myohaung Day, 24 January 2003 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could arrange for the present letter and its annex to be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Allieu Ibrahim **Kanu**
Chargé d'affaires
Deputy Permanent Representative



**Annex to the letter dated 27 January 2003 from the Chargé
d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the
United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council**

**Address by President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, Commander-
in-Chief, Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, in
commemoration of Myohaung Day**

Friday, 24 January 2003

As your Commander-in-Chief, it is with great pleasure that I am here to attend this year's Myohaung Day celebrations, where we remember the sacrifice and bravery of Sierra Leoneans who served with the Royal West African Frontier Force during the Second World War. On this anniversary of the gallantry shown at Myohaung in 1944, I join you too in remembering the sacrifice of our soldiers, policemen, ECOMOG, the CDF, UNAMSIL, IMATT and members of other security agencies, who have throughout our history, fought and worked to maintain and preserve public freedom, democracy and national sovereignty.

I believe it is particularly relevant for us to remember the contribution of our forefathers at a time when after so many years of turmoil, the people of our nation are now in a position to enjoy the fruits of peace. Of course, such a peace does not come without responsibility, and it is you in the RSLAF, together with those of the Police, Prison Service and other security agencies that the main burden of this responsibility must fall.

You will no doubt be aware of the recent incidents involving persons who seem to be bent on returning the Nation to the horrors of the past, and who seek to undo the efforts and sacrifices of those we now remember. It is only right therefore, that on this auspicious occasion I am able to recognize the contribution made by members of the Police, RSLAF, UNAMSIL, IMATT and the other security services whose efforts over the past days and months have continued to ensure that such evil men remain unable to disrupt our hard-won peace. Your country owes you a debt as profound as that which we owe the soldiers of yester years who served with such distinction at Myohaung.

It is in recognition of your responsibility to the Nation for the preservation of our borders and the peace and security of our people that so much has been invested in your development. The re-equipment programme that has recently been completed sees the RSLAF with a standard of weapons, uniform, vehicles and equipment that is far more capable than that which we have recently known. These, together with huge improvements in administration and training, have ensured that the RSLAF is more highly respected, more capable, better paid and administered than in recent memory.

Your deployment during last year to secure the borders and territorial waters of our country at a time of increasing regional uncertainty is a testament, not only to the improved professional capability of the RSLAF, but also the pride, commitment and willingness shown by our soldiers and families in accepting the responsibility placed upon you by the people of this Nation. As your Commander-in-Chief, I salute you and thank you for your considerable efforts thus far. I only ask that you continue to display the qualities of service and leadership that our people and I are coming to expect from you.

While I know of the considerable improvements that have been made in recent months, I am fully aware of the huge amount of work that still remains. I am particularly concerned about the appalling state of our infrastructure, including barracks, and the resulting living conditions under which many of you are required to live and work. While Sierra Leone remains a country with huge financial constraints, I will be taking a personal interest in your welfare as Commander-in-Chief to ensure that whatever can be done is done with the resources that are available. Many of you will be aware of the programme that has been introduced by the Ministry of Defence, aimed at building and improving your living and working conditions.

This programme, which has been initiated at the highest level, is known as OPERATION PEBU. OPERATION PEBU has my fullest support, as do similar measures that are planned within the Police and other security services. I am therefore happy to report to you that substantial work has already started. As an example, engineers are already working to refurbish Teko Barracks in Makeni, Moa Barracks in Daru, and Wilberforce and Juba Barracks in Freetown. I am also happy to note that a new ward in the Military Hospital has been recently opened and work started on a new Maternity facility. The first new Married Quarters for fifteen years have been completed

and handed over at Juba in the past few days. Our engineers will also begin work next week in Kailahun on a brand new site, with further areas identified for future development across the country. As such work continues, I believe the resulting improvement in stability and infrastructure will allow the RSLAF to develop further, growing to its full potential while allowing substantial enhancement in family living and working conditions.

I know that the Ministry of Defence is working closely with other Ministries and Government agencies to provide the much-needed resources that will be required by OPERATIONS PEBU. They, and I, are fully aware of the importance of this initiative to our soldiers and their families, and therefore the Nation.

Comparable improvements have also taken place in the Sierra Leone Police Force. Police Officers in the various ranks have received high quality training both locally and internationally. Renovation work have been carried out at the Police Training School at Hastings, the Kissy Police Barracks and the Makeni Barracks.

Police stations have also been renovated or new ones built countrywide, including Calaba Town, Tombo, Tankoro, Moyamba, Masiaka, Gbalamuya, Mongere, Mattru Jong, Kabala and Bumbuna. This has facilitated the re-establishment of police presence and the enhancement of law and order in all the Districts in the country. We have also provided modern communications systems for the Police Force as well as vehicles, motor-cycles and other transport facilities for every division within the Force. Significantly, the new Marine Unit in the Sierra Leone Police has been provided with patrol boats, thus enabling them to patrol our inshore waters. All personnel of the Sierra Leone Police are now supplied with uniforms.

As I have remarked in the case of the RSLAF, improvements in the living and other conditions of service of the Sierra Leone Police will continue to be pursued by my Government until every member of the Force takes home a decent enough salary and provided with good working and other conditions necessary for the attainment of the highest standard of their operational effectiveness.

To this end, programmes are being implemented or developed to address some of the key issues central to the welfare of police personnel and their families, as well as the Prisons Service and other security agencies.

It is matter of common knowledge that when I assumed office as President in 1996, the security situation in the country was extremely precarious. The war was raging relentlessly with disastrous consequences to the entire country. I was determined to fulfill my election pledge of ending that senseless war and restoring peace and normalcy back to the country. For that reason, we exerted all our efforts in that direction, and thank God, peace has at last come. The duty of all Sierra Leoneans now is to do everything to sustain that peace so that we can concentrate on rehabilitating our battered country and embark on meaningful development.

The international community has always supported us in every respect in this effort. It is still investing a lot in our peace process and is prepared to continue to assist us provided we continue to behave in a manner that will convince the international community that we deserve its continued assistance.

What we need above all now is to sustain that peace and security. I would like to emphasize that without peace and security we cannot create wealth and prosperity for our Nation. Without peace and security, there can be no development. Thus we need peace and security to make our country a prosperous nation. We need peace and security to be able to educate our children. We need peace and security to be able to develop our social and educational infrastructure. We need peace and security to be able to achieve any form of development. With wealth and development there will be plenty for all.

And let me assure you that my Government will always strive to provide adequate resources within its means to meet the needs of those of you who maintain the security that guarantees the creation of wealth and prosperity.

I wish to refer briefly to a few other relevant matters. I am aware of a standing regulation in the military which prohibits individual members of the Forces from making direct personal approaches to their Commander-in-Chief. This is a regulation which certainly has its usefulness having regard to the

nature of a disciplined force. But I have stated openly before, that without prejudice to the existence of that regulation, I as your Commander-in-Chief, may be prepared to make exceptions in certain circumstances when necessary. Where for instance, a reasonable number of officers or men wish to discuss with me matters pertaining to their terms and conditions of service, or other pertinent matters, they should be able through their Commander, to request an audience with me, and I will be glad to receive them. I have expressed this position before.

I am taking this opportunity to repeat it for the benefit of the new members of the Forces who may not be aware that they may, in appropriate cases, be able to communicate with me directly by employing this method.

It is my view that there is a lot of virtue in free and frank communication at all levels in an organization such as the Forces, as it will prevent misconceptions and protect the Forces from being misinformed and manipulated by ill-motivated individuals. This channel of communication with me should be used whenever necessary. It is available to all Forces, Police and Prison Service.

I am further informed that some malicious misinformation is doing the rounds to the effect that the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which has been established here, is untended to prosecute an unlimited number of persons who had any involvement in the rebel war. This is utterly false. The officers of this Court and others have been at pains to explain to the whole nation that the Court will have jurisdiction to try only those persons "who bear the greatest responsibility" for the atrocities that were committed. I have myself stated on many occasions that the Court will concern itself with only that small number of persons who could properly be described as the ringleaders. There will be no prosecution whatsoever for the rank and file and those whom I have often referred to as "passengers" or "foot soldiers" in the organizations concerned.

It is therefore mischievous for any person to intend to instill fear in the minds of any group of people to the effect that the Special Court has been established to try all and sundry. The fact of the matter is that as a government we have decided and embarked on a path to reconciliation. The entire nation has accepted reconciliation as an essential element in the peace

building process. That is the way we are proceeding, except in the few cases which may qualify for trial.

My attention has also been drawn to a situation which prevails in the Prison Service. It is pertinent that I allude to that situation here, as it has security implications. I am informed that the procedure for enforcing discipline and reacting to allegations of misconduct of Prison Officers is extremely clumsy and cumbersome, and that by the application of the established Civil Service rules and regulations to such matters, it has been difficult to eradicate some glaring malpractice in the Prison Service. This is a security issue, as it has the potential of creating untold problems and suffering for the entire citizenry.

It is my view that prompt and effective disciplinary procedure should be put in place within the Prison Service independently of the Civil Service, to deal with cases of the misconduct of Prison Officers in their relations and dealings with prison inmates.

I direct that the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Director of Prisons in consultation with the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice should, with immediate effect, devise regulations for that purpose in line with what now prevails in the Police Force.

In summary, I would like once again to register my thanks and appreciation for the work of the RSLAF, Police, UNAMSIL, IMMAT and other security agencies, not only for what you have achieved in recent days and months to ensure that the peace we have all nurtured so carefully remains and grows within the country, but also for what you have still to achieve. I would not wish to understate the challenges which we have at hand. However, I have no doubt that the country will be able to continue to depend on your commitment and professionalism over the coming months and years, in the same way that past generations were able to live under the guarantee of peace provided by the gallant sacrifice of our forefathers during actions such as those in Myohaung.